

I Claim:

- 1 1. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer, said guide comprising:
2 a flexible position member including a first end, a second end, and an alignment
3 mark near said second end;
4 a body adapted to slidably engage said position member such that said first end of
5 said position member extends horizontally from said body, and said second end
6 of said position member extends vertically from said body; and
7 a mount for coupling said body to said trailer; and
8 whereby, when said tow vehicle approaches said trailer said tow vehicle pushes said
9 flexible position member through said body such that the height of said
10 alignment mark is indicative of the distance between said tow vehicle and said
11 trailer.

- 1 2. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 position member comprises a flexible steel tape.

- 1 3. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein the
2 position of said alignment mark is adjustable.

- 1 4. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 3, wherein said
2 alignment mark comprises a movable sticker.

- 1 5. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 body further includes a vertical support adapted to support a generally vertical section of said
3 position member.

- 1 6. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 5, wherein said
2 vertical support includes at least one position member retainer.

1 7. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 5, wherein said
2 vertical support includes a target mark such that the alignment of said alignment mark with said
3 target mark is indicative of proper alignment of said tow vehicle with said trailer.

1 8. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 body further includes a horizontal support adapted to support a generally horizontal section of
3 said position member.

1 9. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 8, wherein:
2 said body includes a vertical support adapted to support a vertical section of said position
3 member; and
4 wherein at least one of said vertical support and said horizontal support is collapsible.

1 10. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, further
2 comprising a target mark adapted for placement on one of said tow vehicle, said trailer, or said
3 guide, such that the alignment of said alignment mark with said target mark is indicative of
4 proper alignment of said tow vehicle and said trailer.

1 11. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 10, wherein the
2 position of said target mark is adjustable.

1 12. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 10, wherein said
2 target mark is visible in a rear view mirror of said tow vehicle.

1 13. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 guide further includes a visual sight adapted for mounting to said tow vehicle to facilitate lateral
3 alignment of said tow vehicle and said trailer.

1 14. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 13, wherein said
2 visual sight comprises a cover having a stripe thereon, said cover adapted for placement over a
3 tailgate of said tow vehicle.

1 15. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 13, wherein said
2 visual sight comprises a mark on said tow vehicle visible through a rear view mirror of said tow
3 vehicle.

1 16. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 15, wherein said
2 mark comprises a sticker placed on said rear view mirror.

1 17. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 15, wherein said
2 mark comprises a sticker placed on a rear window of said tow vehicle.

1 18. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 mount comprises:
3 a first portion for engaging said trailer; and
4 a second portion adapted to detachably engage said body of said guide.

1 19. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 18, wherein said
2 first portion of said mount comprises a clamp.

1 20. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 19, wherein said
2 second portion comprises a vertical member adapted to slidably engage a portion of said body.

1 21. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 20, wherein a
2 portion of said body and a complementary portion of said vertical member of said mount are
3 dovetailed to facilitate slidable engagement of said vertical member and said body.

1 22. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 20, wherein at
2 least a portion of said vertical member is slotted to receive a portion of said body.

1 23. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 20, wherein the
2 bottom distal end of said vertical member includes a position stop to vertically position said
3 guide when said body and said vertical member are engaged.

1 24. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, further
2 comprising a removable base, said removable base adapted to magnetically engage said trailer,
3 and to facilitate the attachment of said mount thereto.

1 25. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 position member is disposed so as to engage a flat portion of said tow vehicle.

1 26. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein one
2 portion of said position member is disposed over said receiver.

1 27. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said
2 guide further comprises:
3 a visual sight adapted to engage said tow vehicle and to a laterally align said tow
4 vehicle and said trailer; and
5 a target mark such that the alignment of said alignment mark with said target mark is
6 indicative of proper alignment of said tow vehicle and said trailer; and
7 wherein said visual sight and said target mark comprise the same mark.

1 28. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide, said method
2 comprising:
3 fitting said trailer with said guide, said guide including a flexible position member
4 having a first end and a second end, and a body adapted to slidably engage said
5 position member such that said first end of said position member extends
6 horizontally from said body and said second end of said position member extends
7 vertically from said body;
8 extending said first end of said flexible position member toward said tow vehicle;
9 backing said tow vehicle toward said trailer to engage said first end of said position
10 member with said tow vehicle; and
11 pushing said position member through said guide until said second end of said
12 position member reaches a predetermined height.

1 29. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 28, wherein said step of fitting said trailer with said guide includes detachably mounting said
3 guide to said trailer.

1 30. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 29, wherein said step of detachably mounting said guide includes sliding a portion of said guide
3 over a complementary mount fixed to said trailer.

1 31. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 29, wherein said step of detachably mounting said guide to said trailer includes magnetically
3 coupling a removable base to said trailer.

1 32. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 28, wherein:
3 said position member includes an alignment mark disposed near said second end; and
4 said step of pushing said position member further includes pushing said position member
5 through said guide until said alignment mark reaches a predetermined height.

1 33. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 32, wherein:

3 one of said guide, said tow vehicle, and said trailer includes a target mark; and
4 said step of pushing said position member further includes pushing said position member
5 through said guide with said tow vehicle until said alignment mark is aligned with said
6 target mark.

1 34. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 28, wherein:

3 said tow vehicle includes a visual sight; and
4 said method of aligning said tow vehicle with said trailer further includes the step of
5 laterally aligning said tow vehicle with said trailer by laterally aligning said visual
6 sight with a portion of said guide.

1 35. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim
2 28, further comprising a step of initially calibrating said guide, said step of initially calibrating
3 said guide comprising:

4 aligning said tow vehicle and said trailer;
5 attaching said guide to said trailer;
6 extending said first end of said position member toward said tow vehicle until it
7 contacts said tow vehicle; and
8 recording the vertical position of said second end of said position member as said
9 predetermined height.

1 36. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer, said guide comprising:
2 position indicating means including a first end, a second end, and an alignment mark
3 near said second end; and
4 a body adapted to mount said position indicating means to said trailer; and
5 whereby when said tow vehicle approaches said trailer said tow vehicle pushes said
6 position indicating means such that the height of said alignment mark is indicative
7 of the distance between said tow vehicle and said trailer.

1 37. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 36, further
2 comprising means for detachably mounting said guide to said tow vehicle.